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ATOMIC TESTING AND DEPLETED URANIUM: VETERANS NEED HELP

HON. BOB FILNER

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, October 10, 2007

Mr. FILNER. Madam Speaker, I rise today to urge support for two bills I have just reintroduced, the "Recognition of Forgotten Atomic Veterans and their Surviving Spouses Act" (H.R. 3794) and the "You Were There, You Get Care Act" (H.R. 3795).

The Recognition of Forgotten Atomic Veterans and their Surviving Spouses Act (H.R. 3794) directs the Department of Justice to obtain the records of all Atomic Veterans from the Department of Energy Operations Office in Nevada. Using these records, they are to locate and advise all veterans or their surviving widows of their rights under RECA and guide them in filing a claim for the compensation that is due them.

RECA is the program passed by Congress in 1990 (P.L. 101-426) that provides compassionate payments to individuals who contract cancers and other serious diseases as a result of their exposure to radiation from above ground tests of nuclear weapons or from employment in underground uranium mines.

Because the VA did not provide medical care to Atomic Veterans in many cases, many died at an early age. So there are thousands of widows, many on fixed incomes, who have never heard of RECA and do not know that they may be eligible for compensation. My bill will help them apply and receive substantial compassionate payments to ease their burden.

The You Were There, You Get Care Act (H.R. 3795) ensures that veterans who served

in the 1991 Gulf War and subsequent conflicts will be considered "service-connected disabled" for any illnesses currently covered by RECA and other diseases found by the Veterans Affairs Secretary to result from depleted uranium exposure.

Depleted uranium is an incredibly effective weapon, but its residue has a half-life of 4 billion years and many believe that it is a carcinogen. We simply cannot allow another generation of veterans to be treated as were the Atomic Veterans.

In addition, this bill calls for an in-depth medical study to be conducted by independent civilian medical entities, independent of the Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs, to determine other diseases that may result from exposure to depleted uranium.

We need to ensure that veterans from the Gulf War and all wars waged since will not die an early and painful death without the health care and compensation they need and deserve.

Taken together, my bills make a bold statement—that when young men and women volunteer for service, they can count on their government to compensate them and care for them if their service lends to illnesses. These assurances are so important and so necessary and should aid in the recruitment and retention of military personnel.

EXPRESSING SUPPORT FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF AGREEMENT RELATING TO REUNIFICATION OF CYPRUS

SPEECH OF

HON. ZACHARY T. SPACE

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 9, 2007

Mr. SPACE. Mr. Speaker, I wish to make known my support for H. Res. 405, a bill expressing the sense of Congress in support of the immediate implementation of the July 8,

2006 agreement as the way forward to prepare for new comprehensive negotiations leading to the reunification of Cyprus within a bizonal, bicomunal federation as set out in the relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions.

On July 20, 1974, Turkey illegally invaded the island of Cyprus. Thirty-three years later, we remember this black day as we continue hammering out a suitable way forward. This is absolutely necessary as the people of Cyprus have suffered unjustly for far too long.

Thirty-three years ago, Turkish troops invaded Cyprus in flagrant disregard for international law. As a result, an estimated 160,000 true Cypriots were displaced and another 5,000 Cypriots were killed. The current occupied area is notably one of the most highly militarized areas in the world with 43,000 Turkish troops stationed there illegally. In an act of further defiance, in 1983, Turkish Cypriots declared themselves a sovereign nation. To date, they are the only ones who recognize themselves as such.

Together with both the E.U., and the U.N., the United States has been a strong ally of the Republic of Cyprus, and we owe it to her to continue our steadfast support. As a Congress, we must uphold our Nation's pledge to advance the July 8th agreement that President Papadopoulos and Turkish Cypriot leader Mehmet Ali Talat reached a year ago. This agreement would begin the process of setting up bicomunal committees and working groups to address day-to-day issues facing those caught up in this conflict.

I am a cosponsor of H. Res. 405 because of the history I've outlined here. The July 8th agreement is the way forward for an island that has suffered far too long.

As a Greek American and as a member of the Hellenic Caucus, I could not feel more strongly about the reunification of Cyprus. The issue is straightforward and clear: we must aid our ally, the Republic of Cyprus, in righting the wrongs of the past 33 years. Passing H. Res. 405 is a step in the right direction.